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Home missions

*A Fiftieth  
Anniversary*  
M. KATHARINE BENNETT



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**B**EGINNINGS are always interesting, and in the search for them the mind instinctively reaches toward a simple, basic fact which provides a point below which one need not delve. It would, therefore, be of keen interest could one name a date and a place of which it could be said that here was the actual *beginning* of the woman's nationally-organized body for Home Missions that came into corporate existence on December 12, 1878.

Few organizations of wide appeal appear, Minerva-like, full-grown and panoplied for service; rather are they a natural outgrowth of various contributing forces that find a need for union that strength, mutual encouragement and efficiency may result. It was thus that the Woman's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church came into being: so slight was the very first beginning that no one of those who participated in it could know how pregnant with power and with prophecy of service it was. A group of a half dozen women, shy and untrained, gathered together in prayer and with earnest wish to serve, must have been the seedlet from which has sprung "a great tree filling the land," as was said by Mrs. Darwin R. James in her annual address of May, 1886.

But the pages of church history open to interesting and suggestive bits and authoritative information is spread in the volumes that record the proceedings of the General Assembly in the early part of the nineteenth century. Denominational Boards, interdenominational agencies and secular causes were not then so numerous as to claim the time of the small group that formed the Presbyterian General Assembly, and the records have much more the intimate touch of a family interest than is now possible. In the Minutes of 1811 following a reference to "Missionary Tract and Bible Societies" are found these words: "It has pleased God to excite pious women also to combine in associations for the purpose of aiding, by their voluntary contributions, one or the other of the above institutions." Women had already been led to "combine in associations," so *beginnings* antedate 1811. Were these groups sporadic, or was there one "in the beginning" and did others hear of it? How much one wishes to know the answer to this. However, the record assures us that these units were approved by those in authority, for the comment on the above statement reads: "Benevolence is always attractive, but when dressed in a female form possesses peculiar charms. . . . We hope the spirit which has animated the worthy women of whom we speak, will spread and animate other bosoms."

Female Cent Societies of various denominations existed as early as 1800 and some were doubtless Presbyterian, but there is no definite record as in 1811. But from that date forward there are frequent references: the Minutes of the Assembly of 1815 note that "The Assembly have heard with lively pleasure of the exertions of pious and benevolent females in some portions of our church, to raise funds for the support of indigent students in the Theological Seminary (Princeton) . . . Through the past year several young men of promising talents and piety were prevented from entering the Seminary for want of support. The Assembly hopes that this fact will be sufficient to increase the number of female associations for the support of indigent students preparing for the gospel ministry."

The Minutes of the Assembly of 1819 make special mention of the "Female Mite Society of Scrubgrass" and of the "Female Benevolence Society of Fairfield," and Lawrenceville, New Jersey, established a "Woman's Missionary Society in 1821, organized in the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Green, the mother of John C. Green, who founded the John C. Green School of Science at Princeton University.

Because this society is the oldest known Presbyterian Missionary Society which has had an unbroken existence it may be of interest to enter a bit into the thinking of the church women of 1821. A constitution was adopted by the Lawrenceville Society which read in part as follows:

"We the subscribers reflecting upon the low and embarrassed state of the funds of the Theological Seminary of Princeton, and of the various Presbyteries having young men under their care, and upon the expense necessarily attending boarding, clothing and instructing so many persons; feeling too the importance of preparing faithful and zealous men to meet the demands made from various parts of the world for Gospel Ministers, and to fill up all vacancies in the church, do deem it both a duty and a privilege to contribute some aid, however feeble, to the promotion of so great and important a design.

"Perceiving moreover the many powerful, disinterested and successful exertions now making in our own country and elsewhere for the promotion of our Redeemer's Kingdom upon earth, the rapidly increasing of missionary and Bible intelligence from every quarter of the globe and the great utility and importance of diffusing such information throughout a Christian community; do resolve to form ourselves into a society for the promotion of these objects."

A report prepared on the occasion of the Anniversary of this society said:

"These meetings were held every two weeks, summer and winter, as required by the constitution. They lasted from two until six, at which time the hostess served supper. If the day proved stormy, the meeting was postponed but never omitted. A record was not kept of the members present but

of the absentees; the presumption being that all the members would be present. In case of unavoidable absence, a substitute was sent. If this was not done, a fine was exacted. The usual phrase of the secretary is, 'We regretfully note that the following members were absent,' then follow the names, not a long list generally. The manner of the record was calculated to make the delinquent feel very shamefaced when the minutes were read at the next meeting. A clergyman or elder came to lead in prayer. Most faithfully did these mothers of the church carry out the more difficult part of their object, that of disseminating religious intelligence. . . .

"The following extracts gathered from the minutes, illustrate this phase of their activity: 'Read an account of the Sandwich Mission, and Dr. Romyn's charge to the Harmony Mission.

"'Began to read Brown's History of Missions and proceeded to the "Propagation of the Gospel among the Anglo Americans by Brainard.'" Brown's History of Missions seems to have furnished the literary pabulum of a great many meetings. . . . The feats of sewing that these ladies accomplished are calculated to put their great granddaughters to the blush. They seem occasionally to have done general sewing for the purpose of replenishing their treasury, but generally they adhered to their object, that of assisting the wardrobes of students who were preparing for the ministry. They noted the number of 'false collars' and 'false bosoms' made."

In 1822 the Assembly reported clothing received for students not only from Lawrenceville, but from 34 other societies such as the *Female Praying Society* of Newcastle, Delaware, and the *Female Industrious Society* of Troy, New York.

"As the cool mountain springs are to the majestic Hudson," Mrs. S. F. Scovel, Chairman of the committee called to organize church women nationally for Home Missions, wrote years later, "so these time-honored sewing societies are to the noble, recognized women's work of today."

That in some sections these various local societies had some relation one to the other is found as early as 1824 for in that year it was reported that the Rev. Mr. Rhodes who was appointed to work for two months in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, was "to receive one-half of his compensation from the Female Domestic Missionary Society of that County." By 1828 one at least of the "Female Societies" had determined to make claim to recognition for it is recorded in that year that "The Female Society of Bedford, New York, which contributed \$50.00 to the Board (of Home Missions) requested that this donation be published in the Christian Advocate and a copy be donated to them." It is significantly added that "The Board decided to adopt this policy with respect to any society donating \$20.00 or more."

By 1844 there is record that the women's auxiliaries are preparing boxes for the missionaries, especially to aid the wives and children, but there is in the Annual Report of 1849 stern chiding that these boxes are not to be considered as any part of the salary of the missionary or an

"excuse to the male members of the Church to withhold or diminish their offerings."

It is hardly possible to evaluate the courage and faith of those women who were thus forming organizations of women in the churches without taking thought of the status of woman during the first half of the Nineteenth Century, a "Century destined to be thought of as the Woman's Century, so many were the changes affecting her status that came in this period." Mrs. Helen Barrett Montgomery tells us that "Northampton, Mass., so late as 1788 voted 'not to be at any expense for schooling girls'; another town graciously permitted the girls to assemble for instruction in the public schools from six to eight in the morning, during the summer months. This was in 1804. In 1826 Boston rather peevishly abolished its girls' High School (so called) because so many girls were clamoring for admission. The story is told that when the question of taxing the town to provide schooling for girls was discussed in Hatfield, one indignant citizen exclaimed, "Hatfield school she's? Never."

In 1834 Mary Lyon attempted in vain to secure endorsement of her project for a Girls' School from the Massachusetts General Assembly and it was not until 1837 that Mt. Holyoke Seminary was opened. Emma Willard, Sophia Smith and others were still struggling for educational opportunities for women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Anna Shaw had not yet succeeded in enlisting many in the effort to obtain civic rights for women. A few vigorous and independent thinkers were asking for a more generous attitude toward women and better opportunities for them, but still the greater number of both men and women were acquiescing in a status and a spirit which in one New England community expressed itself in the statement that factories were a blessing as, by employment therein women and children "become a source of wealth to the family rather than an encumbrance." At a convention of the Friends of Industry, held in 1831, it was reported, says Miss Edith Abbott, that about \$4,000,000 was paid annually to 3,900 female employees in cotton factories. She quotes the report as saying, "This immense sum paid for the wages of females may be considered so much clear gain to the country. Before the establishment of these and other domestic manufactures, this labor was almost without employment. Daughters are now emphatically a blessing to the farmer. Many instances have occurred within the personal knowledge of individuals of this committee in which the earnings of daughters have been scrupulously hoarded to enable them to pay off mortgages on the parental farm!"

Denied civic duties and educational opportunities, alert, intelligent women turned to the church as the agency through which they could

express their desire for service, for co-operative effort. But it would seem that the church itself had no place prepared for them and had taken no account of their potential value. Nothing daunted, quietly, persistently, the women organized and worked, and made a place of their own, and within the sphere they had chosen won the admiration of their male contemporaries—as indicated by the Assembly records.

Then came the Civil War, disrupting, demanding, sorrowful. So far as can be learned most of these small missionary societies, Bands and Mite Societies, carried on during the tragic years. Gifts could not always be as large, but prayer and service continued and new societies were organized. The War, with all of its tragedy, brought to the women a new knowledge of their abilities and a new desire for larger opportunities. Hardly had peace been declared before the training of the five hard years was transferred to the claims of peace.

It was not Presbyterian women alone who thought in new terms: Congregational, Methodist, Baptist and other denominations found among their women new demands for opportunity to serve the church in larger ways. The parallel lines of the activities in the various denominations are of keen interest but may not be told here.

In 1802 the General Assembly formed a Standing Committee for Home Missions and in 1816 the Board of Home Missions was organized; for half a century it prosecuted its work in a vast land in which communication was by wagon or on horseback, where the penetration of the wilderness was a slow, difficult and dangerous process. Except for the Indians and Negroes, the mission of the Board was to the pioneers who were pushing from the settled regions into the more remote sections and who were to be followed by the church. The commission of the Board therefore took cognizance only of the need of preaching the Gospel. In 1867 Alaska was purchased, increasing the national territory, and in 1869 there was completed the last link of the first transcontinental railroad. Spurs, north and south, and other through lines followed rapidly; an era of tremendous national development followed, almost unknown parts of the country became accessible and challenging need for mission service was found.

It was in 1867 that Mrs. Alexander, the wife of an army officer who was stationed in the then isolated territory of New Mexico, wrote to her friends in Auburn, New York, of the appalling ignorance and need of the Mexicans by whom they were surrounded. The Mexican War of 1846-47 had moved the southern boundary of the United States to the Rio Grande and many Spanish-speaking people had thus become inhabitants of this country. They were illiterate, untrained, and the vivid accounts of the writer so moved the hearts of the women who read

that they organized themselves into a "Santa Fe Association" with the purpose of supporting a missionary teacher in the city of Santa Fe. This Association became auxiliary to the Woman's Union Missionary Society, an interdenominational body organized in New York City in 1861 by Mrs. Thomas C. Doremus. A year later the Presbyterian women withdrew from this Union Society and founded "The New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado Missionary Association," auxiliary to the Boards of Home and Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church.

On November 22, 1866, a Presbyterian missionary, the Rev. D. F. McFarland, had reached Santa Fe and three months later had organized a church; but he found so untrained and unprepared a people that he opened a school for the Spanish-speaking children. To aid him the Santa Fe Association sent a missionary teacher, Miss Charity Anna Gaston who in November, 1867, reached Santa Fe by stage coach, thirteen years ahead of the railroad. It is interesting to note that in April, 1927, a building at the Allison-James School, Santa Fe, was named Gaston Hall in memory of the courageous woman who had gone there sixty years before, Allison-James being the direct successor of the small day school in which she taught.

There has been, to date, 1867, no action by the General Assembly authorizing Home Mission schools; the need, however, is so apparent, the call from the missionaries on the field so insistent and the women so eager to respond that schools are established and teachers sent, funds being supplied by the rapidly forming women's organizations. The urge for association with others like-minded was pressing: Boards and Associations appeared, some raising money for both Home and Foreign fields, some denominational, some interdenominational. Chronological account becomes difficult, and details sometimes are lacking as records are inadequate.

Robert Laird Stewart in his Life of Dr. Sheldon Jackson records that the Santa Fe Association in its first year "paid the salary of the Bible reader and teacher in Santa Fe; assisted in defraying the expenses of a missionary in Arizona, another in Colorado; aroused interest in behalf of the Pima and Navajo Indians; sent out Bibles, tracts, and three communion services. In all, \$1,203.50 was raised. In the following year, money was raised for the purchase of a valuable property at Santa Fe, upon which were buildings used as church, parsonage, and schoolhouse. Then followed the establishment of a mission at Las Vegas, the purchase of buildings there, and the erection of a church.

"The Ladies' Union Mission School Association, located at Albany, New York, undertook the support of the school at the pueblo of Laguna for the first three years of its existence. This association was organized

as a branch of the New York Society, on a stormy day in the month of March, 1871. In the following year, it was incorporated so as to hold land for mission purposes. It proved to be a valuable auxiliary to Dr. Jackson's work in a time of need, but, like the parent society, which was also helpful at several points, according to its ability, it distributed its work among the locations where the need seemed to be greatest, irrespective of denominational influence or control.

"It is worthy of note in this connection that the founders of this Union Missionary Society and its several auxiliaries, were the first to respond to the call for organized work in the support of missionary teachers and evangelists on our western frontier, with a view to supplementing the work of the churches. In some cases, also, they were privileged to prepare the way for the tardy advance of the missionary. They were the first to break with the tradition, so long held by many in the churches, that woman's work in the home field was limited to the preparation of missionary boxes or the securing of funds to supplement the deficiencies or reductions of the missionaries' salaries. The call which they heard was recognized as the call of God, and in responding to it by direct efforts to save the lost and uplift the degraded of their own sex in the benighted regions of our new possessions, they became the advance guard of a mighty and ever-increasing host of ministering women, whose field extends now over a vast continent and whose influence is felt for good in every quarter of the land."

In the spring of 1870, the "New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado Missionary Association" became "The Ladies' Board of Missions," which under the leadership of Mrs. J. C. Graham, made itself auxiliary to the Boards of Home and Foreign Missions and sought the co-operation of auxiliary societies for both branches of the work. At the close of its first year, it reported forty-seven auxiliaries, and receipts in money amounting to \$7,647.06. . . . The sphere of its operations in the home field was mainly in territories committed to Dr. Jackson's care, and his advice and co-operation were sought in connection with the points which the officers of this Board decided to supply."

In 1869 Sheldon Jackson, then a young man but destined speedily to become a great missionary statesman, was sent by the Board of Home Missions to open up the great Rocky Mountain area, to survey its needs and to plan the church's advance. Through the pages of *The Rocky Mountain Presbyterian*, which he established in 1872, Dr. Jackson told in vivid and powerful words the story of the great new West and of its needs and its possibilities. Travelling constantly into most inaccessible places, even to Alaska, of which territory he may be said to have been the patron saint, he claimed the land in the name of Christ

and called earnestly upon the church to bring its forces forward to the banners that he had planted. His call was a challenge to Christians and to patriots: to none did it come more clearly than to the women of the churches. Dr. Jackson, more than any other one man, had long appreciated the unused power of this group and was constantly urging that they be encouraged to organize nationally for Home Mission service and to accept definite responsibilities for women and children of the neglected and exceptional populations. He argued that the sending of "boxes" to the families of missionaries could not measure the service of Presbyterian women and that the most direct challenge to them would be in having one organization with auxiliaries and in giving that organization financial responsibility.

"At this time, strange as it may seem in the light of present conditions, every suggestion that the sphere of women's work in the home field should be enlarged, so as to include the establishment of mission schools or the raising of funds except for the purpose of supplementing the salary of missionary laborers on the frontier, was met with disfavor or open opposition. In the strong Presbyterian cities of Philadelphia, Pittsburg and Allegheny, where arrangements had been made for Dr. Jackson to address the women in behalf of the cause he represented, the pastors of the churches were waited upon by a committee of ladies and entreated not to announce the proposed meetings from the pulpit. . . . Another hindrance to its advocacy, at this time, was the attitude of the officials of the Board of Home Missions, who could not see their way clear to authorize or commend it. After careful study of the situation, from the standpoint of the missionaries on the frontier, the senior secretary, the Rev. Henry Kendall, D.D., who at first was not favorably disposed, eventually gave to it his hearty and unqualified support. From this time onward, he was closely allied with Dr. Jackson in a long-continued and persistent effort to gain for this cause the approval and sanction of the highest judicatories of the Church.

"Through all the phases and developments of the movement, Sheldon Jackson held persistently and consistently to the view that the best results could only be secured for the home work by the creation of a distinct central society devoted to this one cause. His experience in the field convinced him that the work to be done was of such a character that it must stand upon its own foundation and make its appeal on its own merits; and in proportion to its relative importance and urgent necessities." \*

It should be noted that in 1870 two Woman's Boards auxiliary to the

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\* Dr. Stewart in "Life of Sheldon Jackson."

Board of Foreign Missions had been organized, in Philadelphia and Chicago, and that the Ladies' Board of Missions of New York, also organized in 1870 was auxiliary to both Boards. In 1873 a fourth Board auxiliary to the Board of Foreign Missions and known as the Occidental Board was organized in San Francisco, to be followed in 1877, by the Board of the Southwest in St. Louis and the Board of the North Pacific at Portland, Oregon.

During the early '70's overtures were sent to the General Assembly, some at least doubtlessly stimulated by Dr. Jackson, from the women of a number of Western States asking that there be organized a woman's national home missionary body. Year by year during that decade one sees such a body foreshadowed. In 1873 it is indicated in Assembly that the women in societies are increasingly aiding the families of missionaries and that they are also giving to other objects under the Board of Home Missions and it is hoped that these gifts with those to Foreign Missions may be "the precious first-fruits of a plentiful harvest."

It is in this same year that General Assembly hears the Standing Committee on Home Missions . . . report as follows:

"The hearts of our sisters are in both these enterprises (Home and Foreign Missions). The same women who are most ardent in their desire to send the Gospel abroad, are most zealous in efforts for the evangelization of their own neighborhood and their own land. A portion of them have thought it best to let the same organization embrace both objects, and to let the work of both be supervised by the same ladies. Others have thought that the whole work will be most efficiently done if a separate Board of ladies have charge of each. Your Committee are informed of consultations among the ladies interested, which give promise of harmonious adjustment, and of increased efficiency in the prosecution of the women's work in both departments. . . .

"It was further suggested, 'that the Home Board should keep it in their own hands; that they should not wait for ladies to take it up of themselves, but should appoint a lady in each of several central positions, who, with such help as she can secure for herself, might bring this matter of raising money for Home Missions under our Board before the ladies' Societies, or the ladies in their appointed district.

"Your Committee respectfully and emphatically commend these womanly and business-like suggestions to the approval of the Assembly, and to the maturing consideration of our Home Board. In one or another form, through existing organizations or otherwise, as their wise hearts, counseling with the wise minds of our Board may devise, we trust that a large increase of efficiency will be secured, and that steadily

more and more this one mission work, for our land and for other lands, will become the work of our homes."

In 1875 General Assembly adopted a recommendation urging "the organization of a Woman's Home Missionary Society, with auxiliary societies, under the advice and counsel of the Board of Home Missions, or its officers." In this same year it is reported that these detached auxiliaries have contributed through "boxes" the sum of \$7,348.90 and in addition directly to the Board, \$12,582.50 or a total of \$19,931.48.

"On the 28th of January, 1876, a plan for the co-operation of the women's societies with the Board was adopted and published. Up to this date, however, the question of 'school work' had not been officially considered. In several instances the missionaries in the field had established schools under the direction of the superintendent, where funds had been provided by independent societies or individuals, but the Board did not assume the authority to plant them or to formally accept the charge of them. In May of this year it is still further suggested to the Synods, through the Assembly, to appoint annually a Committee of women in each Synod, who shall be a medium of communication between the Board and the various Women's Missionary organizations within its own bounds." These Synodical Committees were appointed in seven Synods the following autumn, viz., in the Synods of Albany, Cincinnati, Colorado, Michigan, New York, New Jersey and Pittsburgh, and others followed rapidly, continuing in active service until a few years ago when the synodical organization made them seem unnecessary. When originally planned these Committees were not only to be "a medium of communication" as noted above, but were also to "have the oversight of organizations and operations for Home Missions among their sisters in the bounds of their respective Synods." In the autumn of this year, a gift of \$500 was placed in the hands of the treasurer, for the employment of teachers in Utah, under the supervision of the missionaries. In connection with its acceptance, the following action was taken:—"That the secretaries be authorized to expend the amount thus contributed, for the purpose indicated, without further commitment of this Board." This cautious deliverance blazed the way for the consideration and hearty approval of educational work on the home field by the Assembly of 1877, "as rapidly as the women's societies should provide the funds." The Committee of Home Missions reviews the overtures that have been received asking for "the establishment of schools as distinct from and in advance of the establishment of churches, and consequently, the employment and commissioning of teachers as distinct from ministers of the Gospel, and the Report and the Overtures note

that such schools are already in operation through the use of funds especially contributed for the purpose, and the Assembly is asked to 'authorize or advise, or at least approve, this new department of labor.'

"In these Territories, we must begin at the very bottom; and it is found practically necessary, in order to succeed, to have schools under direct conduct of the missionaries. Such schools care not for secular instruction alone, but for religious instruction in connection with direct gospel instruction. These schools should not be left uncontrolled; and it seems eminently desirable that the Board control them."

The Territories referred to are those of Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona, and in May of 1878, one year later it is reported that twenty schools have been established, three in Alaska, ten in Utah, one in Idaho, six in New Mexico. Most of the funds for the support of these schools are evidently being secured from societies that are sending through the Ladies' Board of Missions, although three or four smaller agencies are sending funds and some local societies send directly to the Boards. The Board of Home Missions finds itself at once impelled to define this new service upon which it has entered, for primary education is becoming increasingly the responsibility of the state with which the Board does not wish to compete. It, therefore, lays down the limitations of this service, limitations so wise that they have since been the guide for Home Missions schools. "It is quite impossible," said the Board, "to fix merely territorial limitations to this work, because the natural and proper limitations are in the character and condition, and not in the localities of the people to be reached."

But General Assembly has authorized a woman's national organization for Home Missions. Is any action being taken to realize this new society? Yes, the indefatigable Sheldon Jackson was striving to translate Assembly action into living reality. "He was writing letters to influential women in all parts of the land, with special reference to the formation of a central organization for the unification of the work so auspiciously begun. With a view to bringing this matter to a decision, he urged the officers of the Synodical Home Mission Societies to call a general convention for the formation of a central organization for the whole Church. This they hesitated to do, because of the impression which generally prevailed that the Board of Home Missions was the proper authority to issue the call. He then applied to the secretaries of the Board to arrange for such a meeting, but the members of the Board were divided in opinion as to the expediency of taking such action, and the secretaries in view of this fact were unwilling to take the responsibility. Despairing of securing action from the constituted authorities of the Church, Dr. Jackson issued the call on his own responsibility and

made arrangements for a convention of women to meet at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on the 24th of May, 1878, to consider the desirability of effecting the organization of a National Home Missionary Society for the women of the Presbyterian Church. Having called the meeting he carried on a vigorous correspondence with prominent women in the several synods asking their co-operation in securing a full representation and a satisfactory issue in keeping with the importance of the occasion. . . ."

Years afterwards Mrs. Wilson N. Paxton of Pittsburgh wrote to Dr. Jackson: "But for your persistent, tireless, and wisely-directed efforts, through the press and in public addresses in all the large and many of the smaller cities and villages of the north, to arouse the women of the Presbyterian Church to organized work for home missions and to create a public sentiment favorable to such an organization I feel sure that the formation of "The Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions" would have been delayed many years. . . ."

Again the pages are turned and there is found recorded the meeting of Presbyterian women held in Pittsburgh during the time of the Assembly of 1878. At this time, a Resolution was adopted "that a Committee of ladies be appointed from various parts of the country to confer with the Ladies' Board of Missions, New York, as to the propriety of that Board devoting itself exclusively to Home Missions, and should the New York Board fail to comply with the overture of the Committee, it shall be empowered to call a meeting of delegates from the different churches at a suitable time and place, to organize a new Board." The meeting with the Ladies' Board of Missions held in July was "characterized throughout by a spirit of kindness, candor and Christian courtesy." The overture was presented and counter plans were proposed by the Ladies' Board: these were agreed to by the representatives of the Pittsburgh Committee who were present but were not agreed to by the absentee members when submitted in writing to them and the negotiations fell through.

Therefore, on December 12, 1878, there gathered at the Bible House, New York City, the delegates who had been appointed at the Pittsburgh meeting. They were:

Synod of Albany, Presbytery of Troy—Mrs. William M. Johnson  
Synod of Central New York, Presbytery of Syracuse—Mrs. M. C. Armstrong  
Synod of Cincinnati—Mrs. W. P. Prentice  
Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Elizabeth—Mrs. R. T. Haines  
Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Elizabeth—Mrs. W. C. Roberts  
Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Elizabeth—Mrs. C. H. Langdon  
Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Elizabeth—Mrs. O. E. Boyd  
Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Jersey City—Mrs. Ashbel Green

Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Jersey City—Mrs. J. D. Bedle  
Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Morris and Orange—Mrs. Robert Aikman  
Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Newark—Miss J. H. Nichols  
Synod of New Jersey, Presbytery of Newton—Mrs. M. Gregory  
Synod of New York, Presbytery of New York—Mrs. G. L. Graham  
Synod of New York, Presbytery of New York—Mrs. R. R. Booth  
Synod of Pittsburgh, Presbytery of Pittsburgh—Mrs. S. F. Scovel  
Synod of Pittsburgh, Presbytery of Washington—Mrs. J. I. Brounson

At this time surely one of the first messages read must have been the following telegram:

Cheyenne, Wyoming,  
December 10, 1878.

Mrs. Oscar Boyd,  
Rahway, New Jersey.

"Yours received, do not fail to organize. The work is greatly hindered throughout the whole church for want of a central organization. The women are waiting for a central committee to map out the work and lead them.

(Signed) Sheldon Jackson."

A name was chosen—The Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, and officers were elected—Mrs. Ashbel Green, President, Mrs. R. T. Haines, Secretary, Mrs. O. E. Boyd, Treasurer.

A national Presbyterian Home Mission Society had come into existence, not suddenly or illogically, but as the natural result of forces that for three-quarters of a century had been leading up to this culmination. Hundreds of local societies, some presbyterial societies, woman's synodical committees for home missions and small associations and Boards antedated the national body. The *beginnings* were far back, were at first weak and small; but the spirit of love and of life was in them, and from them has come the unified and nation-wide organization of Presbyterian women that for fifty years has served church and country quietly, efficiently and devotedly.

How little could that group gathered at New York on December 12, 1878, have realized the forces that were being released but with what prayer and love they laid foundations. As the Minutes of those early meetings are read one is interested to see how few changes have been made in principles: there has been growth, development, but on the lines so carefully prepared. Presbyterian women of today are debtors to those wise and forward-looking women of the time of beginnings.

Twenty-three Center Street, then the headquarters of the Board of Home Missions, became headquarters for the Woman's Executive Committee. "No comfortable quarters," writes one, "greeted this first com-

mittee, but instead a little upper room which had been used by the Board of Home Missions as a storage place for leaflets. It was a dingy room, seven by nine feet, with a sloping roof and one window. A small table stood in the center, and for several years seldom more than four or five women gathered about it to consider ways and means for the new organization."

For seven years the Committee remained at the above address, years during which the organization was perfected and in which a national consciousness replaced a sectional one. During this period the work of the Committee grew by accretion as well as by development: in 1880, the Woman's Board of Missions of the Southwest, located in St. Louis, decided to transfer its Home Mission work to the Woman's Executive Committee, and in 1882, the Woman's Board of Home and Foreign Missions of Long Island "which justly claims the honor of sending the first female teacher to Utah" did the same. In 1883 the Ladies' Board of Missions sends its last report to the Board of Home Missions as it, too, transfers its Home Mission Work to the national Committee. It must be recalled that present territorial lines between Home and Foreign Missions were not established in the early days and that the Board of Foreign Missions carried on mission work among Indians until 1893.

The last report of the Ladies' Board to the Board of Home Missions lists the mission schools that are being transferred: in New Mexico, Taos, Las Vegas, El Rito, Holman's Ranch. "In Colorado," says the Report, "the mission schools have been superseded by the public schools, for which the people seemed prepared." A number of schools in Utah are transferred: "First, in size and importance is the Salt Lake Institute" with 225 pupils, thirty of whom are boarders: other schools are at Manti, Ogden and Richfield. In Alaska a school at Fort Wrangell was turned over to the Woman's Executive Committee, this being the one opened in 1877 by Mrs. A. R. McFarland, widow of the Mr. McFarland who began work at Santa Fe.

In North Carolina, Whitehall Seminary, on the outskirts of Concord, the forerunner of the Laura Sunderland School, was given to the care of the national Committee and was the beginning of its work in the Southland. The report closes with "A feeling of sadness comes over us as we write 'the end' on this page of our history."

Through these various unions and the growth among the societies in 1885 the Woman's Executive Committee reports 175 commissioned workers, and receipts for the year of \$128,523.36. In 1883, the Committee had already reported to the Board of Home Missions that "all but four of the Synods connected with our General Assembly,

have appointed 'Women's Synodical Committees of Home Missions,' upon the existence of which the uniform and systematic prosecution of our work as a part of that of the Church itself is based. . . . The women and children of our church seem ready to support schools in proportion as the call for their establishment is made known to them. This fact has convinced us that it was true economy to print and circulate extensively 'leaflets' in explanation of the work." From the beginning appeals have been based on information, and there has been at all times careful planning for the education of the societies. It would be interesting could the thousands of different leaflets and the millions of pages of reading matter that have been prepared, be listed. In later years Mission Study Classes have been furthered and reading courses have been prepared in furtherance of the educational plans.

In 1882 the Board of Missions for Freedmen was organized with headquarters at Pittsburgh and the following year, by recommendation of General Assembly, a Freedmen's Department of the Woman's Executive Committee was formed. The purpose was to secure from the women's organizations auxiliary to this Committee funds for school work among the Negroes and to make the machinery of publicity and of the gathering of funds available for this purpose. Although the name "Freedmen's Department" was given up in 1915, as not denoting the actual relation this service still continues.

One other transfer of work remains to be noted: In 1907 the union of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church with the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. brought the transfer of the school work of the former to the Woman's Board of Home Missions. This consisted of Bell Institute at Walnut, North Carolina, and three day schools. After a few years of separate existence the Institute was united with the boarding school at Hot Springs, North Carolina, under the present name of Dorland-Bell.

In 1885, the headquarters were moved to 280 Broadway, corner of Chambers Street, where the Committee had two small rooms: its space was still limited but there was room for a few more women at the bi-weekly meetings. It is of interest to note that at the first session of the Committee Tuesday was chosen as "Board Day," and that for fifty years it has remained Home Mission Day at headquarters.

On August 17, 1885, Mrs. Green, the President of the Board, died and on November 15, 1886, Mrs. Haines, the Secretary, followed her. It is not easy to evaluate the services of these two women who with courage and devotion had accepted the leadership of the new organization, had established forms of procedure for it, and had permeated it through and through with the spirit of prayer and of sacrifice. Their

accomplishment, as well as the words of their contemporaries note them as women of unusual abilities, of great charm and strong convictions. The young organization was sadly shaken by these losses, but God had raised up a leader in the person of Mrs. Darwin R. James, of Brooklyn, who for twenty-four years was the efficient and beloved leader of woman's work in Home Missions. To summarize even in the briefest way the service of Mrs. James would be to write the history of the Woman's Executive Committee and of the Woman's Board of Home Missions during her presidency. She was the animating and guiding spirit: one would wish to recount her force and charm, the power of her trained mind, the clearness of her thinking, the statesmanlike quality of her constructive planning, the daring of her imagination, the courage of her execution and above all the spiritual fervor which lifted her above petty annoyances, discomforts or disappointments.

It would be of interest to recount the names and the services of the women who have contributed to the growth of the Committee's work, but only a few of those who helped to build the organization may be noted.

From the beginning Dr. Jackson had given to the Woman's Executive Committee the free use of space in *The Rocky Mountain Presbyterian*, later known as *Presbyterian Home Missions*, and this means of acquainting Presbyterian women with the needs of the mission field and with the plans of the Committee had been of inestimable value. In 1882, Dr. Jackson transferred it to the Board of Home Missions which continued to publish the magazine in the joint interest of the Board and the Committee. "The work enlarged from year to year, and the need for fuller reports and statements regarding it than could be given in the joint periodical, was greatly felt. A separate publication was frequently urged upon the Woman's Executive Committee by many of its friends, but for the sake of economy and the general unity of the work of Home Missions, it has not been thought wise, hitherto, to accede to these demands. By the act of the last General Assembly, consolidating the various publications of the church, the Woman's Executive Committee cannot continue the joint publication and is constrained to publish this new monthly, that the work of the Committee may have full presentation before its constituency." (Editorial in first number of *The Home Mission Monthly*, November, 1886.)

Mrs. Delos E. Finks, the wife of a home missionary in Colorado, was called to the editorship of the new magazine, a choice most happy. Mrs. Finks brought to the task a mind of rich resources and keen discernment, calm judgment, peculiarly unbiased opinions and that redeeming sense of humor which leavens so many difficulties. Her contribu-

tion to the Woman's Executive Committee was a notable one both through the magazine and by her wise counsels in the meetings of the Committee itself, where, to use her own expression, she calmed "feverish" anxieties.

When in November, 1911, just twenty-five years after the first number of the magazine had been published, Mrs. Finks died, the Woman's Board found itself most fortunate in that the daughter of the editor, Miss Theodora Finks, was ably prepared to carry on this editorial responsibility, which she did with satisfaction and success until the merging, in 1923, of *The Home Mission Monthly* and *Woman's Work*, the magazine published by the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, to form the present magazine *Women and Missions* devoted to the interests of both Boards.

It has been an unusual history that in forty years a magazine should have but two editors, and those two, mother and daughter: their business acumen may be noted in that this little magazine built up a paid subscription list of 40,549 which was transferred to *Women and Missions*, and for most of its history was entirely self-supporting and turned over surplus funds to the Board: this in spite of the fact that it has never carried an advertisement. The Home Mission Monthly Building at the Sheldon Jackson School, at Sitka, and Finks Hall, the Girls' Dormitory at Wasatch Academy, Mt. Pleasant, Utah, were built from some of the surplus of *The Home Mission Monthly* the latter happily commemorating the name of its editors. It is interesting to recall that Mrs. Finks also served for six years, 1886-1892, as Corresponding Secretary of the Woman's Executive Committee, and this during the difficult years of establishing the new magazine. Fourteen women have held this position in the fifty years, the longest term of office being that of Mrs. F. H. Pierson, 1892-1902.

Until 1893 one chief duty of the office of General Secretary was the administration of the mission field. The inadequacy of such care became more and more evident and a new office, that of Superintendent of Schools, was created. To this position there was called the Rev. George F. McAfee, member of the well-known Presbyterian family of that name and once missionary among the Sioux of South Dakota. Dr. McAfee divided his time between the mission field and headquarters, at this time at 53 Fifth Avenue in the old Lenox home, where the Board remained from 1888 to 1895, when it moved to its present address, 156 Fifth Avenue. The intimate, personal contacts between the field and the Board have continued to the present and have been a vital part of the enthusiasm and affection of the women of the church through the half century. Under the Woman's Executive Committee and the

Woman's Board of Home Missions but five have held this office, the title of which was later changed to Superintendent of Field Work.

In 1893 a Department of Young People's Work was also established by the Committee. The Committee was keenly alive to the value of an early impress on the minds of the young and to the fact that there must be a constantly inflowing flood of recruits for service in the mission field and in the home churches if the rapidly developing work was to be carried on without halting. Young People's Work was still a new thing but the avidity with which it was accepted and the splendid work of the young people immediately won the most skeptical and through the years the Board itself treasured with increasing affection this part of its service. Three officers held the position of Secretary for Young People's Work in the thirty years from its establishment to the consolidation of the Boards. One of these, Miss M. Josephine Petrie has officially served the cause of National Missions for twenty-nine years, the longest continuous term of any officer of the Woman's Board. For twenty-six she cared for the work among young people, building up a stalwart organization and enlisting large service. In her first year as Secretary, 1898-99, there were reported \$45,106.47 as contributions from young people's organizations. In 1923-1924 the last of her service there were reported, \$139,543.59.

It was in 1893 also that the Board of Foreign Missions transferred the last of its Indian Work and that the severance of financial relations between the National government and the Presbyterian mission schools for Indians was decided upon. It was customary for the Indian Department to pay to sectarian schools a per capita amount annually for the care and education of Indian children. It became evident that serious competition for the children was conducted because of the funds and that flagrant abuses occurred. There was anxious discussion at Board headquarters as to the principle involved in this union of Church and State, and in order to make its own position clear the Woman's Executive Committee took action to refuse such funds. This meant in 1894 a debt of \$101,598 on the small Board, but in 1898 the report states that all the indebtedness had been wiped out.

In 1897 the name of the Woman's Executive Committee was changed to the Woman's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., to indicate more clearly the scope of the work and the responsibilities of the organization, but the relation to the Board of Home Missions remained unchanged.

Surely no one could have foreseen the heavy responsibilities, in years to come, of those who should be called to be Treasurers of the little body organized in 1878. No one could have thought in terms of an annual

income running over a million of dollars, in terms of Permanent Funds, Legacies, Annuities, legal business, etc. But as the responsibilities grew, so grew the women and each succeeding auditing company has testified to the well-managed affairs of the Committee and the Board. In fifty years, six Treasurers have borne the responsibility for funds.

In 1911 the Woman's Board of Home Missions, acting with the Women's Board of Foreign Missions, established a joint service to students for the purpose of keeping them while in Colleges and Universities in touch with the opportunities for service in the mission field or as workers in their home churches. The results of this endeavor cannot be tabulated but the influences of it are constantly returning. Student Secretaries visited the colleges, spoke at chapel and with denominational groups, held private conferences and carried on correspondence with those students who had shown special interest in the work done by the church and its agencies.

During all the years a large body of volunteer women have served as Board members giving service that can hardly be estimated. Officers and members have been as one group throughout the years, working together for the cause they all loved and for which neither time nor strength was too great to be given. From this membership the presiding officer was chosen, also the Recording Secretary of the Board and the various committees. Five Recording Secretaries have written the many volumes of Minutes that record the doings of the Woman's Executive Committee and of the Woman's Board of Home Missions, Minutes that are of inestimable value historically.

At the tenth Annual Meeting of the Woman's Board the following Resolution was adopted: "*Resolved*, That the week ending with the last Sabbath of February be the week of Humiliation and Prayer; and we recommend that upon one day of this week a special service be held, when there shall be the confession of individual and national sins, with offerings that will fitly express the contrition." For a number of years this Day of Prayer was observed by societies auxiliary to the Woman's Board, but in 1896 other denominations joined in its observance, and at the present time the Day of Prayer for Home and Foreign Missions is observed interdenominationally all over our country.

And what should be said of the host of Presbyterian women from coast to coast who have been the very fibre of this national organization? Hundreds of thousands of women who during the fifty years have served as officers in synodical, presbyterial and local societies, or who as unficered members have by gift, by service and by prayer carried forward the cause. "The women that publish the tidings are a great host," and none but the Master Himself may follow the wide-diverging and far-

reaching lines that through the years from generation to generation mark their service. "Let her own works praise her in the gates"—this shall be the epitaph of each of these unnamed workers to whom the Woman's Board of Home Missions owes all that it has been and that has been done in its name. One dares not begin to name even a few—the hosts of faces that rise before one are too numerous. Not the least of the service of woman's nationally organized work has been the reflex influence upon the women of the churches: it has broadened their horizons immeasurably, has increased their sympathies, has enlisted their patriotism and has deepened their spiritual life. All these emotions have been translated into terms of service.

And what has been the scope of the organization which these women have built and through which they have functioned? As we have seen, its beginnings were the spontaneous efforts of women in scattered communities. There is no way of knowing the exact number of organizations on December 12, 1878, when the Woman's Executive Committee was organized but we know that in the year 1886-1887 there were reported twenty-four Synodical Societies, 167 Presbyterian Societies and 3,500 local societies and bands, and 382 contributing Sabbath schools. An amazing amount of hard work had been done to bring such results in so few years. In this same year gifts of \$192,296.55 were reported, \$17,379.74 of this amount being for work among Freedmen.

The year 1926-1927 closed with a report indicating 42 Synodical Societies, 267 Presbyterian Societies, 6,000 Local Societies and Young People's Organizations; and total gifts from them amounting to \$1,201,142.81.

The Secretary's Annual Report in 1886 says: "We are thus permitted to close our year *free from debt*," and the women of 1927-1928 may give thanks that good habits were thus early established and that they and others were carefully trained therein. A 20 per cent increase in gifts was urged that year of 1886-1887; in 1896 equal quarterly payments were first urged—an appeal that has a familiar sound thirty years later.

While this account is but a brief history of the organized work of women, of the forces that created it and of its contributing and administrative scope, it could not be complete without very special thought of the service for which it came into being, and the growth and the magnitude of that service. There has already been noted the special service allocated to it when it was organized, that of providing schools for those special groups in the population that because of race, language or territorial retardment were not provided therewith, these

schools to give academic teaching, to place great emphasis on Christian training and to prepare the way for the establishment of the church.

The larger number of these stations were day schools in small communities and of these there have been some hundreds established by this Board. To an unusual extent, however, this agency has had to view its work in each section of the country as temporary, using that term in a flexible relation to time. As was said by the founders, it was never the intent that church schools were to be competitors of the public schools, rather they were to prepare the way for the latter and in some places supplement them for a time. As local conditions changed church schools have been closed. That there were set-backs in some localities when the mission schools were withdrawn cannot be questioned, but it has often been through these very difficulties that the communities ultimately have had their best development. To know just the moment for withdrawal is seldom easy, but that the principle of state school instruction is the American way can never be denied. The closing of mission schools has sometime been attended by misunderstandings, but most of those closed were closed because their work was done, not because the school had failed. A very recent illustration of how this principle of withdrawal carries on is found in the case of a community in the Middle West: In 1920 the Woman's Board of Home Missions placed two workers in an isolated community, miles from a town or from a railroad. In the spring of 1927 these workers are leaving this station, as the people are ready for new responsibilities. The public school carries pupils through the Junior High School; a County Agent comes in to give instruction in better agricultural methods and a church built by the people with some aid from the Board of National Missions is ministered to by a resident pastor. In the building of the church one man contributed \$100 in labor, working this out at twenty cents an hour—five hundred hours—and the Ladies' Aid earned for the church building fund \$200 by making and selling quilts. This church last year sent offerings to all of the Boards of the Church as well as aiding some state interdenominational work. Was it not a work accomplished when the missionaries withdrew?

As public education has become more general the Board has increasingly emphasized its boarding schools where promising boys and girls are trained for leadership in their home communities. That these schools are accomplishing their purpose is indicated by such reports as that leadership among the Pima Indians of Arizona is provided by those who have been students at the Tucson Indian Training School; that the membership of the Alaskan Native Brotherhood is largely made up of those who attended the Sheldon Jackson School at Sitka;

that through the State of New Mexico graduates of Allison-James and Menaul Schools are found in the places of leadership; that scores of schools in remote sections of the southern mountains are having up-to-date teaching and Christian influence because graduates of the Mission Schools are in them as teachers. A high standard of scholastic work has been maintained, but in achieving this the main reason of the Board for prosecuting its work is never forgotten—the Christianizing of all parts of the life of the students and the sending them out imbued with the wish to serve.

Immediately at the close of the Spanish-American War Cuba in 1898 and Porto Rico were entered as new territory and for more than a quarter of a century the Board has there carried on work similar in type to that on the mainland but adapted to the special needs of the islands. In 1919 the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. withdrew from Cuba and turned over all its work.

Other forms of service than schools were pressed upon the Board as the teachers faced conditions in their fields and as new forms of community service were developed in the country at large. So early as 1887 a small hospital was opened at Sitka in connection with the school, but except for the necessary care of the children in the schools not much medical work was done by the Board until about 1900. Since that time through a few hospitals and by community nurses the Board has served many people annually and no phase of its work has been more helpful or more blessed. The need for such work in isolated sections is appalling and only a limited income prevents a much larger entry into medical missions.

It has not been long since social workers have discovered that leisure hours are the time of danger and have developed community programs that care for the social needs of the people. The Woman's Board was quick to see the great opportunity in this service and soon education, medical work and community service were inextricably woven into one beautiful pattern of far-reaching service.

In 1927 there are reported 99 schools, 21 community stations, 13 medical stations, 12 doctors, 28 nurses, 53 community workers, 473 teachers and matrons.

In 1895 the General Assembly recommended to the Woman's Executive Committee that it undertake work "among people of foreign tongues in the great cities; the mining districts of Pennsylvania, and the West." This work was, however, so interwoven with local agencies and there were so many complications of administration that the Board which felt itself committed to work among people who because of isolation were easily overlooked, did not do much of this type of work. In 1920,

however, the Board established a department of Christian Social Service to co-operate with those synodical and presbyterial organizations which were working among these groups, to help to standardize the work and to be responsible for securing, placing and giving oversight to those graduate students who wish to prepare themselves for church work among foreigners, the Board having established a few scholarships and fellowships for such.

The history of the mission field has been written in Annual Reports, but better still it is written in churches and homes, in useful lives, in transformed communities, in bodies restored in health, in minds illuminated by the love of Christ. Were all the details written here no missionary library would "contain the books that should be written," for not with the students in the schools or with patients in hospitals is the service delimited. Like the ever widening ripples of a disturbed pool the influences shall go down through the ages to the very shores of Eternity.

Brave women, strong, tender and Christ-like were those who began that service which today is the organized work of Presbyterian women for the cause of National Missions. Their successors, too, are meeting the demands of their day and carrying on to fulfill that early-chosen watchword—"Our Land for Christ."

NOTE:—It is the *Fiftieth Anniversary* of women's nationally organized work for Home Missions that is being celebrated, rather than any especial administrative agency: we have, therefore, purposely refrained from placing in the body of this article reference to the administrative changes of 1923, or from the inclusion of the newer nomenclature that came into use at that time.

Following action of the General Assembly of 1922, the Board of National Missions was organized in May, 1923, being a consolidation of (a) the Board of Home Missions, (b) the Woman's Board of Home Missions, (c) the Board of Missions for Freedmen, (d) the Board of Church Election, (e) the missionary work of the Board of Publication and Sabbath School Work, (f) the Permanent Committee on Evangelism and (g) the Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains. In the Board of National Missions the women's and young women's missionary organizations continue their financial responsibility for the work they supported through the Woman's Board of Home Missions and the Board of Missions for Freedmen, this work being administered through two Divisions in the Board—the Division of Schools and Hospitals and the Division of Missions for Colored People. The Woman's Board, with nine members, is continued as a Holding Board, pending final transfer of funds, property, etc., but is no longer an administrative agency. There are fifteen women members of the Board of National Missions together with twenty-five men.

*Price: Ten Cents*

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OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U. S. A.  
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